

CLEANING SYMBIOSIS: NATURE'S CHALLENGE TO THE EVOLUTION THEORY

May 3, 2004 (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is excerpted from "Nature's Challenges to Evolutionary Theory" by Dr. Gary Parker (copyright Institute for Creation Research, <http://www.icr.org/pubs/imp/imp-064.htm>) --

Nowadays, there are many large fish with sharp teeth that roam the oceans seeking what they may devour. But as they feed on smaller fish and shrimp, their mouths begin to accumulate food debris and parasites. Lacking recourse to a toothbrush, how is such a fish going to clean its teeth?

For several kinds of fish, the answer is a visit to the local cleaning station. These are special areas usually marked by the presence of certain shrimp and small, brightly colored fish, such as wrasses and gobies.

Often fresh from chasing and eating other small fish and shrimp, a predatory fish may periodically swim over to take his place in line (literally!) at the nearest cleaning station. When his turn comes, he opens his mouth wide, baring the vicious-looking teeth.

You might suspect, of course, that such a sight would frighten off the little cleaner fish and shrimp. But, no. Into the jaws of death swim the little cleaners. Now even a friendly dog will sometimes snap at you if you try to pick off a tick, and it probably irritates the big fish to have a shrimp crawling around on its tongue and little fish picking off parasites in the soft tissues of the mouth. But the big fish just hovers there, allowing the cleaners to do their work. It even holds its gill chamber open so that the shrimp can crawl around on the gill filaments picking off parasites!

At the end of all this cleaning, the second miracle occurs. You might think the fish might respond, "Ah, clean teeth; SNAP, free meal!" But, no. When the cleaning is done, the big fish lets the little cleaner fish and shrimp back out again. Then the big fish swims off—and begins hunting again for little fish and shrimp to eat!

The fantastic relationship just described is called cleaning symbiosis. Perhaps you have seen cleaner fish in a major public aquarium, or seen pictures of their behavior in television footage or nature magazines. Cleaning symbiosis is a well-known example of mutualism, an intimate relationship of benefit to both kinds of species involved, in this case, the cleaned and the cleaner.

Obviously, cleaning symbiosis has survival value for both kinds of species involved. But does survival value explain the origin of this special relationship? Of course not. It makes sense to talk about survival value, or Darwinian "fitness," only after a trait or relationship is already in existence. ...

Some relationships in biology, even quite complex ones, are the natural results of certain given properties in organisms. As complex as they are, many food-web relationships and biogeochemical cycles develop spontaneously from the behavior of the organisms involved and the inevitable effects of limiting factors. As incredibly complex and well ordered as it is, reproduction in most organisms follows naturally from given behavioral patterns, anatomy, and the processes of meiosis and fertilization. ...

The Christian recognizes that such processes reflect the continuing care by which God faithfully upholds His creation (Colossians 1:16-17; Genesis 8:21-22). But some kinds of relationships point us back to the direct, completed, supernatural creative acts of God. Cleaning symbiosis is one of those relationships.

Incidentally, cleaning symbiosis is not confined to the fish described above. Just as incredibly, the Nile crocodile will open its mouth to a bird, the Egyptian plover, which walks in, picks off the parasites, and then is allowed by the crocodile to leave again! Even the cleaning symbiosis earlier described involves several species of predatory fish and cleaner fish and also several kinds of crustaceans like Pederson's shrimp. Each of these species would have to somehow randomly accumulate a coordinated set of mutations to develop this relationship—unless the relationship was directly created by God and then reproduced after its kind.

No doubt several other mutualistic relationships (those beneficial to both species) also originated with special creative acts of God. There are "dairy ants," for example, that tend herds of aphids, gathering food for them and "milking" them for honeydew in return. Then there's the yucca moth that collects a ball of pollen, stuffs it into the seed chamber of the yucca plant, and then lays a few eggs. Since the larvae that hatch can feed only on developing yucca seeds, their growth is provided for; and since some seeds are left and this yucca cannot otherwise pollinate itself, the plant also benefits. And so on. It would be fun some day to write a book, "One Hundred Thousand Evidences of Creation," just describing such fantastic relationships and the special adaptations of the various kinds!

[Distributed by Way of Life Literature's Fundamental Baptist Information Service, a listing for Fundamental Baptists and other fundamentalist, Bible-believing Christians. Our goal in this particular aspect of our ministry is not devotional but is TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO ASSIST PREACHERS IN THE PROTECTION OF THE CHURCHES IN THIS APOSTATE HOUR. This material is sent only to those who personally subscribe to the list. If somehow you have subscribed unintentionally, following are the instructions for removal. TO SUBSCRIBE to the Fundamental Baptist Information Service, send a blank email to fbis-subscribe@wayoflife.org. TO UNSUBSCRIBE, send a blank email to fbis-unsubscribe@wayoflife.org. TO CHANGE ADDRESSES, simply unsubscribe the old one, then re-subscribe the new one. Or a more simple process is to go to the web site and sign up or change addresses there: <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbis/subscribe.html>. We take up a quarterly offering to fund this ministry, and those who use the materials are expected to participate (Galatians 6:6). Some of these articles are from O Timothy magazine, which is in its 21st year of publication. Way of Life publishes many helpful books. The catalog is located at the web site: <http://www.wayoflife.org/catalog/catalog.htm> Way of Life Literature, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061. 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org (e-mail). We do not solicit funds from those who do not agree with our preaching and who are not helped by these publications, but for those who are, OFFERINGS can be made at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/offerings.html> PAYPAL offerings can be made to <https://www.paypal.com/xclick/business=dcloud%40wayoflife.org>]